

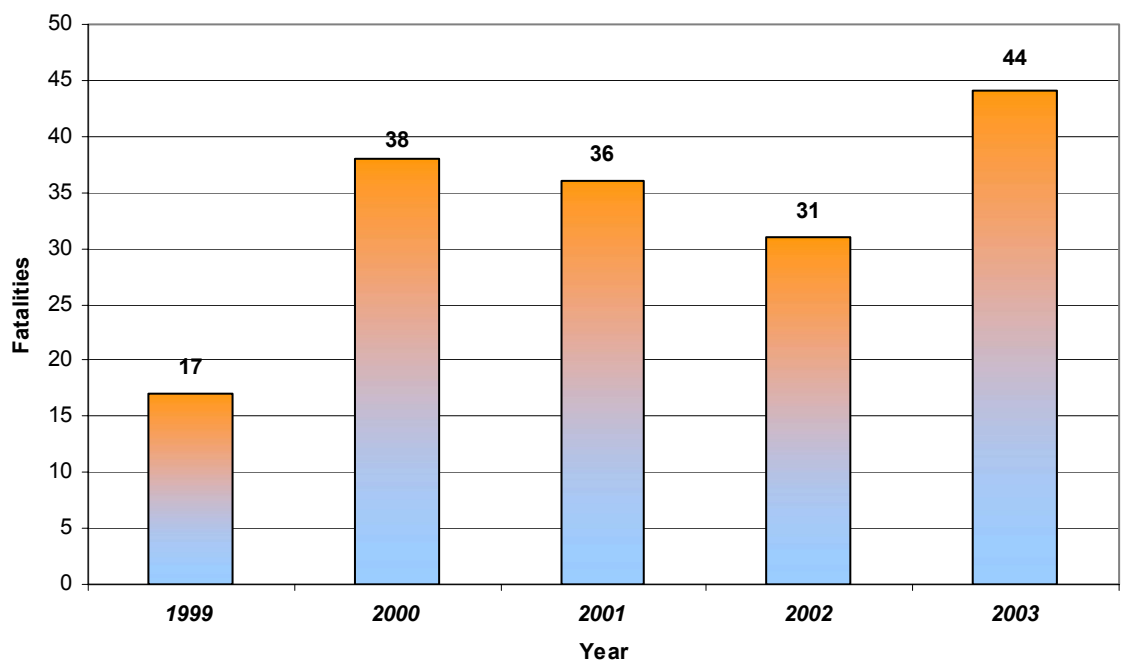
Work Zone

Background

Each year, hundreds of work zones present hazards, inconveniences, and delays to motorists. The definition of a work zone-related motor vehicle crash is a crash that occurs in the vicinity of a work zone (construction, maintenance, or utility) or within an area marked by signs, barricades, or other devices. This designation does not imply that the crash was caused by the work activity or zone. In 2003, work zone crashes supplied three percent of all Illinois fatalities and 12 percent of Interstate fatalities. These percentages are the result of 6,982 Illinois work zone crashes, 31 of which were fatal. These crashes left 44 roadway users dead, including 5 workers and 1 pedestrian.

In Illinois, disproportionate numbers of work zone fatalities occur on the Interstate system and involve large trucks. Furthermore, most crashes in 1999 occurred during the morning and afternoon rush "hours." This trend has shifted, and a majority of crashes are now occurring late at night or during early morning hours. To improve work zone safety and address current trends, increased communication, coordination, and cooperation among stakeholders is necessary. To facilitate this process, IDOT has a Work Zone Safety Committee that was created by legislation in response to high-profile fatal crashes and includes a wide range of representatives.

Figure 15. Illinois Work Zone Fatalities



Source: Illinois Crash Facts & Statistics (1999-2003)

Recent Implemented Strategies

- Implemented several recommendations from the Governor's Work Zone Safety Task Force:
 - Revised legislation to clarify the definition of work zone speeding
 - Increased minimum fine for speeding to \$375 for the first offense and \$1000 for the second offense
 - Legislatively enabled photo speed enforcement in work zones
 - Increased the use of police authority in work zones
 - Revised highway standards to provide more consistent work zones on high-speed facilities
 - Enhanced use of stationary and portable changeable message signs in and near work zones
 - Implemented ISP hireback program and increased its funding
 - Implemented "Trooper in a Truck" program
- Implemented "Scott's Law" regarding proper action in response to emergency vehicles in the roadway and added "Hit a Worker" signs to construction projects.
- Provided work zone training and information for public agencies and industry personnel.
- Redirected focus of the Work Zone Safety Committee.
- Initiated a plan for the Work Zone Public Relations Committee.
- Continued the Illinois Road and Transportation Builders Association (IRTBA) Safety Committee.
- Conducted work zone reviews with IDOT central office and FHWA staff.
- Continued implementation of IDOT's Highway Safety Plan initiatives: Funded local police departments to conduct Work Zone Safety patrols to reduce speeds and increase worker safety.

Challenges

- Inaccurate crash locating from crash reports.
- Speed enforcement in work zones.
- Maintenance of proper work zone signing and traffic control devices.
- Turnover of public and private work zone personnel.
- Relationship between contractors and unions for addressing safety issues.
- Development and implementation of cost-effective ITS and other emerging technologies to improve mobility and safety.
- Limited resources for public agency and industry personnel training.
- Limited resources to develop and conduct public outreach campaigns.
- Delivery of real-time work zone information to the traveling public.
- Queuing beyond the work zone area.

Proposed Strategies

- Pilot and implement photo speed enforcement as well as other innovative speed enforcement strategies.
- Design enforcement “pull over” areas into roadway construction projects.
- Pursue use of speed trailers to determine speed problem areas.
- Provide real-time work zone information to the traveling public.
- Utilize ITS technology to provide accurate queuing information.
- Identify contributing factors for fatal work zone crashes.
- Add rumble strips within and prior to work zones.
- Implement innovative merge techniques.
- Develop a procedure for law enforcement officers to request engineering assessments of crash sites.
- Work with contractors and labor unions to improve safety.
- Expand Work Zone Safety Committee membership to include engineering, enforcement, education, and emergency medical service organizations.
- Expand membership into other organizations’ work zone safety committees.
- Prepare and air public service announcements in coordination with work zone safety campaigns.
- Pursue use of “detectors” and message boards to communicate to motorists when a backup occurs.
- Create a five-year strategic plan for outreach opportunities.
- Continue implementing and developing IDOT’s Highway Safety Plan initiatives.
- Investigate all recent implemented strategies for success.